

Topical Sermons

Three topical series you might like to try

— 3

Vale Tony Nichols

Judith Nichols reflects on the life of a servant of Christ

— 4

CRU goes west

Fostering gospel faith among WA school students

— 6

Lambeth and General Synod

Previewing 2020

— 8-9

Dean Cowper

Peter Bolt on Sydney dean William Cowper's appetite for eternity

— 10

New Cranmer Breakfast

Rhys Bezzant gets theological and personal

— 12

essentials

Autumn 2020

EFAC AUSTRALIA

Essentials is the journal of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion. Promoting Christ-centred biblical ministry.



Welcome to the autumn *Essentials*, a road trip that will take us through all manner of country. From the seven deadly sins to the four rules of evangelical longevity; from a bishop-to-be expelled from the Anglican Church in his ardent youth, to the return of psychedelics; from Christian work amongst WA school students, to the preaching of eternal hope at Sydney funerals: all this and more is here between these covers.

Topical sermons done well can season a basic diet of working through Biblical books for both preacher and hearers. I share some of my adventures in topical preaching on the Ideas Page. The funeral of Bishop Anthony Nichols was a significant occasion for members of EFAC WA, and we have a version of Anthony's wife Judith's eulogy included here. I am sorry not to have been at the New Cranmer Society Breakfast last year to hear the talk that Rhys Bezzant delivered there, but the next best thing is to read it here. Rhys achieves a rare combination of integrated theological and personal reflection in this engrossing piece.

2020 has the potential to be a significant year in the national Church and in the communion as the business of the Appellate Tribunal, the General Synod and Lambeth all unfold. We have news and opinion on these matters from Stephen Hale, Matthew Brain, Kanishka Raffel and Karin Sowada.

There are reflections on fresh work being done in WA as CRU West begins to fly, and on past work done in Sydney, as Peter Bolt draws our attention to the first Australian-born clergyman, 44 years the Dean of Sydney, the eternity-minded William Cowper.

The Bible Study might have been better in time for Christmas, but there's nothing wrong with meditating on the birth of the Messiah in prophecy at any time of year. Thanks Michael Bennett for this encouragement. The book reviews are (I hope) a stimulating mix of secular and evangelical titles.

I also hope you are enjoying our new journal design (thanks Clare Potts). We are back to black and white printing this issue, but the team is continuing to think about how we can give *Essentials* the most bang for your buck. We are thinking about three 24 page issues per annum, and wondering whether this will allow us to afford colour printing. Let us know what you think about the frequency, length and level of production you think *Essentials* should aspire to. Let us know what you liked and what didn't work for you. We hope to stimulate, connect and encourage EFAC members and others across Australia. Drop us a line.

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Essentials is published by EFAC Australia.

www.efac.org.au.

ISSN 1328-5858.

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What is EFAC?

EFAC is a group of Anglican clergy and lay people who value the evangelical heritage of the Anglican Church, and who endeavour to make a positive, constructive contribution at local, diocesan and national levels. EFAC Australia is part of the world-wide Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion.

The purpose of EFAC is to maintain and promote a strong biblical witness in and through the Anglican Church so as to advance the cause of the gospel in Australia.

The aims of EFAC are:

1. To promote the ultimate authority, the teaching and the use of God's written word in matters of both faith and conduct.
2. To promote this biblical obedience particularly in the areas of Christian discipleship, servant leadership, church renewal, and mission in the world.
3. To foster support and collaboration among evangelical Anglicans throughout Australia.
4. To function as a resource group to develop and encourage biblically faithful leadership in all spheres of life.
5. To provide a forum, where appropriate: a) for taking counsel together to develop policies and strategies in matters of common concern b) for articulating gospel distinctives in the area of faith, order, life and mission by consultations and publications.
6. To promote evangelism through the local church and planting new congregations.

7. To coordinate and encourage EFAC branches/ groups in provinces or dioceses of the Anglican Church in Australia.

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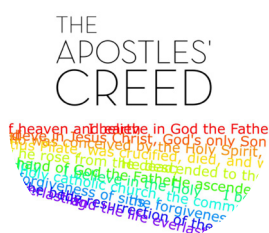
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Ideas Page: Topical Sermon Series

BEN UNDERWOOD

Every now and then I like to devise and preach a topical sermon series. Some of these have been some of the most memorable series to me, and have sometimes gotten more engagement and discussion among the congregation than is usual. I'm no master of the genre, but here are three series I have preached.



THE APOSTLES' CREED

I thought preaching through the creed would be good catechesis—a chance to present a mini-systematic theology, an overview of the gospel story. If people knew the bones of the creed, and through this sermon series could put some flesh on those bones, they might be clearer on the gospel themselves, and better equipped to explain it to others. The series went: Founding Father (Psalm 104, James 1:16-18), Incarnate Son (Luke 1:26-38, Col 1:15-20), Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:1-6, Rom 3:21-26), Exalted King (Acts 17:22-31, Phil 2:5-11) and finally, Life-giving Spirit (Acts 2:1-21, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28). I did not expound any one of the readings, but preached sermons expounding the fatherhood of God, the incarnation of Christ, the atoning exchange of the suffering servant, his now and future reign, and the ways God is transforming the world to perfect Christ's work. Years later a woman told me that when she had just come to church she arrived in time to hear these sermons and they were perfect for her as someone who needed a walk through the basics and the big picture. That was nice to hear.



THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Every so often someone writes a novel or makes a TV series based on the seven deadly sins: anger, pride, lust, greed, sloth, gluttony and envy. If they can give appeal to a TV series, why not to a sermon series? I developed these talks using a consistent set of questions to give structure, namely: 1) What is sin X, and why is it your enemy? 2) How is Jesus the remedy for sin X? 3) How is living by the Spirit the therapy for sin X? And 4) What do you need to do? This repetition (hopefully) hammers home the message that sin is your enemy, Jesus is the remedy and living by his Spirit is our therapy in this life, and that there are particular steps to take in escaping these sins. The individual sins bring out different sides of Jesus' holiness of life and atoning work as they are opposed to all sin. His life and death are all humility, against all pride. His life and death for us are his faithful industry in God's service, against all sloth. His life and death are his satisfaction in doing God's will, against all gluttony and insatiability. After the gluttony sermon a group formed spontaneously to pursue the discussion. They read a book together and met several times. Food is a big deal, connected to a lot of personal issues, but it is not much talked about from the front of church (unless, for example, you preach through the seven deadly sins).



PARADOXES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Reading Allan Chapple's book *True Devotion*, I came across his section regarding the paradoxical nature of our relationship with God, which seemed to me a rare discussion of a true characteristic of our walk of faith. I hankered to explore this through a series of sermons on paradoxes of the Christian life, which came to birth last year. The six paradoxes were: Christ crucified (1 Cor 1:18-31, Is 53:1-5); Love your life and lose it, hate your life and keep it (Mark 8:22-38, Is 53:5-12); Christ is both absent and present (2 Cor 5:1-10, Psalm 13); We are at once sinners and saints (1 John 1:8-2:2, Psalm 65:1-4); We are perfectly free and wholly enslaved (1 Cor 7:17-24, Exodus 19:1-8) and When we are weak, then we are strong (2 Cor 4:5-12, Psalm 22:1-11). I sought to use the same talk structure each time: first, Exploring the Paradox, where I showed each side of the paradox as it appeared in the Bible, and perhaps somewhere the two sides were both expressed together. Second came Resolving the Paradox, where I tried to show how both sides of the paradox were true and made sense, so that the paradox was not a contradiction, but an insight into the Christian life. Lastly came the section Living with the Paradox, where I tried to show how the truth of that paradox might shape our expectations and actions as we follow Christ. I may have bitten off more than I could chew at some points here, and I don't have a story of these sermons making an impact on people. But I was very glad to have given it a go, and I might come back to this one day to see if I can distil the best of this series into a simpler and better set of talks.



Vale Bishop Anthony Nichols

JUDITH NICHOLS

Bishop Anthony Nichols died on 24 August 2019. This is an edited version of the eulogy his wife Judith gave at his funeral at St Lawrence's Dalkeith, WA on 3 September 2019.

Anthony Nichols was born in Sheffield, Yorkshire to a working-class family. He never sought honours or preferment. Being a bishop did not define him as a person so there are no pictures here of him in clerical garb today. Like many people from Yorkshire, Tony took frankness to an Olympic standard, as many of you know. His dad was aspirational and liking the free-spiritedness of Aussie airmen with whom he served during the war, brought the family to Australia in 1947. They subsequently moved to Wollongong, an industrial city south of Sydney where Tony and his brother Roderick were educated.

Tony's Christian journey began at 14 years of age when he was asked to teach Sunday School, so he thought he ought to read the Bible. The first text that gripped his heart was Ephesians 2:4-5, "but because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved." The church he attended with his family was spiritually dead but he often claimed it was through the prayer book service that he learnt of the need to follow Christ wholeheartedly, for forgiveness through Christ's death on the Cross and the absolute certainty of the resurrection of the dead and judgement when Christ returns. His university days laid a strong biblical foundation for his faith through the Christian Union and he was challenged by the opportunity to share the Gospel with overseas students. He was the first Caucasian member of the Overseas Christian Fellowship. He taught for 2 years at Temora in rural NSW where he established follow up bible studies after the Billy Graham Crusade because none of the churches were willing to hold them.

For this he was temporarily expelled from the Anglican Church.

In 1962 he went as a short-term missionary with CMS to the remote British colony of north Borneo, now Sabah, to teach at St Patrick's Tawau—a small town surrounded by jungle with a coastline infested by pirates. While teaching he also founded a teachers' Christian fellowship and established friendships that have lasted down the decades. (Tony returned to Sabah with Judith in 2012 to teach in a Bible College. He returned again in 2017 for the centenary of the church in Tawau whose congregation now numbers 3,000. Tony never despised the day of small beginnings).

From Tawau in 1962 Tony journeyed deck class on a cargo ship via Japan to Shanghai. He was temporarily arrested for



Tony and Judith Nichols and family

pictured

distributing tracts. China occupied his imagination and he enrolled in courses in Mandarin on his return to Australia. He wondered how Christians could survive there and came back to Australia sick, emaciated and with tropical ulcers but determined to minister cross-culturally.

He entered Moore College to study for the ministry. Tony originally believed that he was called to a parish but with an eye to missionary service. However, he was asked to stay on at Moore College as a junior lecturer and his life took a different trajectory. We met at a friend's wedding and married in 1968. Our marriage was an adventurous and loving one. But in all honesty, I can't say that there was never a cross word. Tony's interests were wide. He completed a Master's in Education as he was interested in the rights of parents to choose schools in accordance with their beliefs whatever they may be.

In 1972 we set out with Elizabeth and Naomi for Salatiga in Central Java to teach at Satya Wacana Christian University. It was a dangerous time not long after the attempted communist coup. The best medical care then was of a pre-WWII colonial Dutch standard. Daniel and John were born there.

One of our colleagues was murdered by jihadists and Tony and a fellow missionary took it in turns to fly to Jakarta to take services and live in the house where he had been stabbed.

We loved Indonesia and have had many opportunities to return there since to teach.

Tony was invited to become the Principal of Nungalinga Aboriginal Training College in 1981 preparing the first ordinands and community workers from a traditional background - a new culture had to be learnt. He was appointed as the result of a dream from the aboriginal students who overrode the decision of the white council. Tony adapted

aboriginal learning styles to the teaching curriculum, and he developed a strong empathy with aboriginal people. During this time, he began his doctorate in Sheffield on translation of the Bible because he believed translation of the text often reflected a western mind set. Tony never thought of himself as an academic. He wrote well but never pushed himself to publish. However, in preparation for preaching and teaching the Bible he was indefatigable. He was a great letter writer with a ministry of encouragement.

Tony was called in 1988 to train cross-cultural workers at St Andrew's Hall.

In 1991 he was elected Bishop of the North West.

There followed 12 years of endless travel, recruitment and seeking funds, preaching and teaching from Dongara to Kunanurra. Tony recruited wonderful people who taught the Bible and lived sacrificially; the diocese became Gospel focussed with a biblical ministry in each centre.

On retirement he taught at Trinity Theological College and attended Dalkeith Church where he preached regularly, led a weekly Bible study and ministered the gospel to children, teens and adults.

Tony had a strong social conscience, but he believed that the only way societies could change for the better was through the preaching of the Gospel. He also firmly believed in a liturgy that facilitated the learning of Scripture.

We miss Tony deeply, but Tony is now in the care of that same Lord who kept him safe during the air raids of Sheffield, communist insurgency in Sabah, arrests in China and Indonesia, crash landings, a mugging in Jakarta, riots in Indonesia. How much more is that same Lord Jesus keeping him safe now in his glorious presence.



Tony Nichols

pictured



EFAC Australia Update: Appellate Tribunal Submissions

**BISHOP STEPHEN HALE – CHAIR OF EFAC
AUSTRALIA AND EFAC GLOBAL**

In late 2019 and early 2020 EFAC Australia made two submissions to the Appellate Tribunal.

Submission One related to a reference from the primate in relation to a synod action in the Diocese of Wangaratta. The diocese moved a motion to introduce a liturgy for the blessing of a civil marriage using the language of the revised Marriage Act. A General Synod liturgy already exists to solemnise a civil marriage. The diocese claimed this was merely a matter of modifying an existing liturgy and was not a matter of doctrine. In our response (along with others, including EFAC WA, GAFCON, Sydney, Tasmania, Ridley) we pointed out that the General Synod Canon Concerning Services states that any authorised liturgy has to be consistent with the doctrine of the Church. This doctrine is found in the Fundamental Declarations, the 39 Articles and the Book of Common Prayer. A liturgy that enabled the blessing of a same sex marriage would therefore be contrary to the doctrine of the Church. We proposed that the only way this could be truly tested would be for a canon to be put before the General Synod to be considered.

Submission Two related to a reference from the primate to the tribunal in relation to a private member's bill that was passed at the Newcastle Diocesan Synod (but not given assent to by the bishop). This bill sought to amend the Clergy Discipline Ordinance of the diocese to prevent clergy who conducted services of involving same sex blessings from being disciplined. In our submission we (along with Sydney and Tasmania) raised concerns about whether an individual diocese can act alone and in a way that is contrary to the doctrine of the Church. We also raised concerns about the impact of this proposed action in a diocese where evangelical clergy are roughly a third and over 50% of regular worshippers are in evangelical churches. We also raised concerns about the lack of any prior notice, consideration or consultation prior to the legislation being put on the synod papers.

I'm indebted to Bishop Michael Stead, Jenny George, Allan Bate and Remy Chadwick for their assistance in preparing these complex submissions. Copies of all submissions can be found at the General Synod website.



CRU goes west

SHERIDAN RASTON

Since the 1930s Crusaders has been seeking to proclaim Jesus to the students of independent schools, to nurture Christians, encourage church membership and train young Christians for leadership. More recently CRU West has revived Crusaders' presence in WA. CRU West staff worker Sheridan Raston brings us up to date.



The National Church Life Survey claims a phenomenal statistic, that 80% of adult Christians come to faith before they are 18. Therefore, it is the youth of our nation that warrant significant focus. However, the number of children and teenagers in our churches is decreasing and the world in which these kids live is significantly more difficult to navigate while respecting their faith than in years past. Christian students are a minority in Australian schools, where attitudes towards Christianity seem to have gone from indifference to hostility at a rapid pace. The need for young people to be supported in their faith is greater than ever; encouragement, equipping and nurturing all appear more vital than ever. And yet we hold on to the promise of Christ: "I will build my church".

The earnest ambition of CRU West is to care for and provide opportunities to these students—especially in regard to faith development—in ways that they otherwise might not experience.

We want to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the students of Western Australian schools.

As such, we seek to nurture Christians, encourage church membership and train young Christians for a lifetime of servant leadership.

THE CRU WEST MINISTRY

CRU West is a relatively new initiative of CRU Australia. The Crusader Union of Australia (now known as CRU) was founded in 1930 by the Reverend Dr. Howard Guinness. Dr Guinness was a visionary who had set up Christian ministries in universities across the world. When he came to Australia, he was surprised to see few strong Christians in universities. He saw the necessity to establish school-based ministries as a platform for developing faith early, to see young Christians founded in their faith through school, into university and beyond. He established voluntary groups in schools and camp ministries as a key way of achieving this. Thus, in 1930, CRU saw its first four school groups begin along with the very first holiday camp. CRU has experienced significant growth over

the years, now working in hundreds of schools and running hundreds of school and holiday camps in NSW and the ACT. We believe this ministry has met a real need and God has been at work through the ministry of CRU, and we are praying for the same long term fruit in WA.

CRU West helps to establish and support voluntary lunchtime groups in primary and high schools across WA. These groups offer students the chance to read the Bible and pray together, providing a space for their faith to grow. We also run camps for upper primary and high schoolers in the holidays in the form of year 12 study camps, Christian leadership camps and activity camps. Students from a variety of schools spend a week away, are invested into and are immersed in a positive community where they are served, mentored and trained by a group of Christian volunteers. Through these two avenues—school groups and camps—CRU West creates an environment for students to develop spiritually, as they enjoy being part of a wider Christian family. Our hope is that Christian students will be encouraged in three ways: to own their faith; to flourish in their schools and to serve their churches and other ministries.

In God's goodness, the impact has been substantial over the past three years.

We have gone from five groups in 2017 to over 20 in 2019.

We now run three camps where numbers have grown exponentially. But it is ultimately not a numbers game. The most important way of gauging success is through the individual lives of the students with whom we work and how we have seen God at work. Students have told us how they have come to faith or have grown in their faith. Rory Shiner, Senior Pastor of Providence Church Perth, says

"CRU West is a very exciting development on the school scene in Perth, addressing a real gap in the gospel ecosystem of our city. The history of this work in Australia has brought untold fruit for the gospel in seeing young men and women eternally impacted, and in producing gifted, well-trained and servant-hearted leaders for the next generation of Christian leadership."

While youth groups are vital for the teaching and equipping of Christians kids in our churches, they cannot go with their students into their playgrounds and classrooms which are like a missionary front line. That is where CRU West comes in. CRU West aims to meet youth where they are, in their schools. We want to see Christian communities in schools, where faith is encouraged and supported. One student said,

“CRU West has had a significant impact on my faith. I’ve been a camper on CRU West’s Spring Leadership Camp where we had inspiring Bible talks, discussion groups, prayer times and training in Christian leadership each day. I had the chance to connect with older Christian mentors, asking questions and seeking advice. I also made lots of new friends who I still keep in contact with today. This camp brought me so much closer to God and I felt greatly encouraged knowing that I had other Christians my age and mentors who were walking alongside me, even after camp finished. I also attend the weekly Bible study at my school, which

is supported by CRU West. CRU provides resources for the Bible studies, which makes organising and facilitating the group much easier, and keeps us focussed. The school environment makes it difficult to admit that I’m a Christian for fear of being teased or excluded, but knowing that I have other peers who share the same beliefs and purpose, as well as having CRU West supporting me, is encouraging and comforting, and helps me to stand firm.”

It is easy to become discouraged as our society seems to move further away from God, and to celebrate things God opposes. Through my work with CRU West, I have had the blessing of witnessing God at work amongst upper primary and high school students. As the challenges to being a Christian child in WA grow, God is pouring out his Spirit, breathing new life, and preparing the next generation of saints to do his work—that is really something to celebrate, to cherish and to ask God to do more of in 2020.



Photos provided by CRU



Why bother? Lambeth's enduring significance.

BISHOP MATTHEW BRAIN

It is easy to wonder why we bother with the Olympic Games. Especially as drug scandals mount and novel(ty) sports are included on the program. The round of world championships typically host more events and are a better funnel for the world's best talent than the Olympics. Yet there is something about the Olympics that galvanizes attention and retains its significance. In some ways the coming Lambeth Conference can be viewed in the same light. Why have Lambeth at all when we have our own national or diocesan bodies with clear goals and greater capacity to make binding decisions? Yet, the Lambeth Conference lives on. Like the Olympics there is something in the gathering that is significant even if the significance is difficult to pin down.

One key to unlocking the potential significance of the coming Lambeth Conference is found in its birth. The first Lambeth Conference arose in response to two crises. The crises were both prompted by the inaugural Bishop of Natal (John Colenso). One regarded his approach to reading Scripture, the other was to do with his determination to baptise polygamous men. On my reading this could be characterized as two aspects of a familiar story: how to truly understand God's intention for his people (a hermeneutical question), and how to recognise the church in new or unfamiliar territory (a missiological question). It is not surprising that Bishop Colenso provoked strong reaction as people sought to determine what should be done. In discovering that bishops and councils could not simply coerce Bishop Colenso to do or not do something an appeal was made to the Archbishop of Canterbury (Charles Thomas Longley) to intervene and sort it out.

Here we encounter the key to unlock Lambeth's significance. Archbishop Longley was clear in his own mind that he too did not have the power: either personally or via the various bodies within which he played a leading role, to prevent Bishop Colenso from ministering. So he decided to call a conference at which the bishops of churches for whom their foundation was associated with the church in England¹ could discuss their approach to exercising the relational influence they shared through their common ordination and office. From the beginning the key to the Lambeth Conference's significance was the opportunity for these new national churches to act as a consistent and catholic whole, especially given that, in contrast to the Church of Rome, missionary expansion was not attended with coercive power² Lambeth's activity and self-conception has waxed and waned over the decades, but realising the fundamentally relational nature of the Conference has led me to ask how I might then measure the significance of the approaching sitting. If I am looking for it to make decisions that bind one or other party or coerce this or that behaviour I suspect that I will be disappointed.



*Lambeth Palace. Photo by Herry Lawford
Flickr Creative Commons*

pictured

To be truthful, I am relieved that this is not so. I am an Australian and do not take kindly to being pushed around by larger more powerful groups. Further I am a child of the Reformation who understands that I must weigh my action first before God, even as I sit in the counsels of God's people. However, I am content that this sitting of the Conference is significant because it can do at least five things, each of which is necessary in an era not unlike that which provoked the first.

The most important aspect of the Lambeth Conference is that it amplifies relationship. Even if I am troubled by my association with others, I am inescapably linked to folk from all over the world. While we may need to work hard to discern what we understand to be our 'gospel to proclaim', our relatedness must give way to actual relationship. This is connected to but different to unity (a declaration of being) in that relationship is instrumental rather than ontological.

This leads to the second significant property, in that part of relationship's instrumentality is that it affords an opportunity for clarification. Too often I find that relational (let alone geographical) distance leads to misunderstanding, misrepresentation and the entrenching of positions before solutions can be discussed. There may be no solutions to offer, but unless each generation tries it is wrong to assume that there are none. Lambeth began as a key way for those asked to lead the Anglican Church in an environment that did not make for ready conversation which allowed for problems to be discussed and reservations shared. I do not think that we are far different from then.

One of Anglicanism's weaknesses is that we try to legislate to ensure correct behaviour. It is the artefact of the good desire for doing the Christian life 'decently and in good order', but simple legislation is far from sufficient to deal with matters that involve deep difference. Given the freedom of a non-coercive framework, being able to simply talk (for its relational instrumentality and the chance to clarify meaning and intention) is a blessing. If too much weight of expectation is hung upon the Conference, it will be easy to be disappointed. However, it is surprising the opportunities that can arise if discussion is pursued knowing that I cannot make you do anything.

The fourth significant aspect is that this sitting marks a return to the matters that prompted the first sitting. In my reading the need for Lambeth was an artefact of the Anglican Church's success. It became necessary because of missionary expansion and because of the unique diocesan episcopalianism the

Anglican Church holds dear. It is hardly surprising that we need to continue to conference 153 years later.

And finally did I mention it is an amplification of relationship? I am reminded once more of the lengths that Paul went to in maintaining relationship with the Corinthian church. He did not agree with them frequently. He drew them into his confidence at personal cost. He lost sleep over their beliefs, actions and attitudes. Yet he remained in relationship (yes even the expelled brother was included in this!). If Paul could do it at

such cost, then a Conference once a decade is no hard ask.

NOTES

- 1 A deliberate phrase
- 2 It is interesting to reflect on this decision as it relates to Article XXXIV (Of the Traditions of the Church) and the nature of locally derived congregations who share an apostolic and episcopal heritage.

General Synod Preview

KANISHKA RAFFEL AND KARIN SOWADA

General Synod will meet this year with contentious issues in the air. Kanishka Raffel, Dean of Sydney, and Karin Sowada, Sydney Lay Representative, preview the 2020 Session in its various modes.

An Ordinary Session of General Synod will take place in Maroochydore from 31 May – 5 June. The meeting will gather diocesan bishops and 250 or so elected lay and clergy representatives from every Australian diocese of the Anglican Church. The circumstances of our meeting are tense, and a new primate to be elected in March will chair the proceedings.

Foremost will be discussion about the blessing of same-sex marriage, following decisions by the Synods of Wangaratta Diocese and Newcastle Diocese. These actions prompted referrals to the Appellate Tribunal in 2019 and dozens of submissions have now been received. It is possible that the Appellate Tribunal will not have issued their opinion on these questions by the time the General Synod meets. In addition, the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney tabled nine motions for debate ‘at the request of a diocesan synod’. These will now form part of the General Synod meeting agenda. The nine motions include an apology to LGBTIQ people, an affirmation of the historic Anglican understanding of marriage and singleness and address matters of discipline and fellowship within the Anglican Church of Australia.

Unusually, the Standing Committee of the General Synod agreed to a proposal that the General Synod meeting include one and half days in conference mode to consider matters of sexuality and the future of the Anglican Church. It is expected that this conference will adopt a conference model known as ‘Open Space’. Any member of General Synod will be able to suggest a topic for discussion and members will break into self-selecting small groups to discuss the topic of their choice. Each group will record their reflections and any action items they propose, although there is no mechanism for implementation of action items.

Other General Synod business include a raft of legislation that forms a significant part of the Anglican Church’s responses to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. A General Synod working group led by Sydney representative and barrister Garth Blake SC has worked tirelessly in this area since before the Royal Commission was called. The national Church is greatly indebted to Garth and his team.

The General Synod will also receive a progress report on the vital work being undertaken by the General Synod Task Force on Family Violence led by Melbourne representative, the Rev Tracy Lauersen. The Task Force has commissioned independent research into the nature and prevalence of family violence in the Anglican Church, facilitated discussions between family violence working groups in several dioceses, and is examining available resources for use by dioceses to assist in developing appropriate policy and pastoral responses.

Regrettably, the 2020 meeting of General Synod may be dominated by internal disagreement about matters of longstanding ‘catholic and apostolic’ patterns of biblical faithfulness and holiness in areas of personal sexual integrity and marriage. This is greatly to be lamented. The pressing task of evangelising Australia is likely to take a back seat.

But the intractability of the disagreement between dioceses about the character of the discipleship that is faithful to the Lord’s calling to ‘be holy, because I am holy’ threatens to undermine the sustainability of the national Anglican project. There is great need for earnest prayer that the Lord would preserve us in the bond of peace and the unity of the Holy Spirit.

Even as this conversation takes place, the national church is well aware of the precarious state of many dioceses. The hollowing out of rural communities, the distress of drought, the burden of legacy assets, falling church attendances, and growing secularism requires strategic discussion to enable the re-invigoration of evangelism and gospel mission. It would be a missed opportunity to bring the national church together and simply re-arrange the deck chairs.



Dean Cowper: ministry in the light of eternity

PETER BOLT

William Macquarie Cowper (1810–1902) was Australia’s first Australian-born clergyman. When Sydney Synod passed a motion unanimously to “place on record [the Synod’s] sense of the loss sustained by the Diocese, and its sincere appreciation of the valuable services rendered” he had served as a clergyman for sixty-six years, including forty-four as Dean of St Andrew’s Cathedral.¹

His exceptionally long ministry was dominated by the eternal future assured by Jesus Christ.

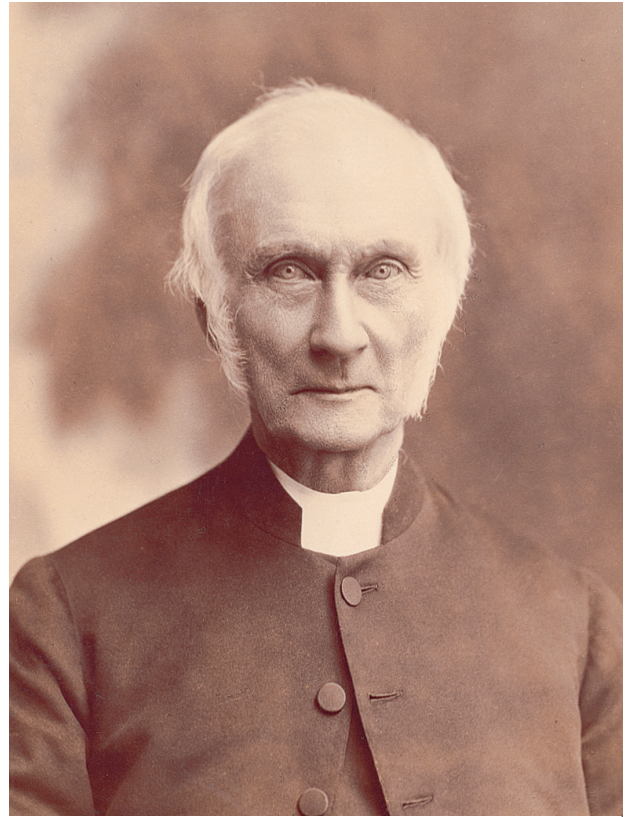
He learned this perspective from his parents, Rev. William and Ann Cowper. In 1827, they were prepared to endure the “painful separation” involved in sending their 16 year old to his university education in England for his own “great, and I trust eternal, advantage”, urging him to study everything “deemed likely to make [him] acceptable and useful among [his] fellow creatures *for their eternal good*.”² By the time the 23 year old Cowper preached his first sermon after his ordination, on 15 September 1833 at Dartmouth, this eternal perspective had become his own. His chosen text showed that he was thinking of his ministry in the light of eternity: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.” (Heb 13:17)³

He returned in 1836 as the Chaplain to Australian Agricultural Company and for 20 years his ministry was centered in Stroud. Here he helped establish gospel work in the northern parts of NSW and in what became the Diocese of Newcastle, as well as playing his part in wider issues of the colony, such as the public debates about education. Like many of his contemporaries, Cowper was deeply interested in education because it “involves alike the temporal and *eternal welfare* of the rising and all future generations”.⁴

“Since man, in his social and moral character, is what he is made by education, the question of his training, even as regards this world, assumes the very highest importance. How much greater still when we take into account the next?”

His time at Stroud came to an end after he lost his wife Margaret in October 1854, after a long and painful struggle with cancer. He drew inspiration from her own eternal perspective:

“Were it not for the faith which He has given me in His blessed Son—a faith which assures me that He will accept me, for the sake of that blessed Saviour who died to redeem me; were it not for this



Dean William Cowper

pictured

faith and this blessed hope, I should sink into utter despair and misery for ever.”⁵

As he left Stroud, the parishioners expressed their gratitude to one “who had for so long a period taken a deep interest in the present and *eternal welfare* of every member of the community”. Cowper, in turn, prayed that the Lord “may guide you in the path of life, and when your earthly pilgrimage is ended, may grant you all a place amongst his redeemed in glory!” His parting sermon (10 February 1856) looked towards eternity, since this occasion may well be “for the last time until we shall meet in the presence of our Great Eternal Judge”. His text was 2 Corinthians 6:1, and he spoke of the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, turning to the famous look towards eternity found in John 3:16: that “whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life”.

When he moves towards his final exhortation, he spoke of the minister being entrusted with the mission to call people to accept salvation through Christ.

Naturally, therefore, he then called upon his congregation “in the name of the living God, [...] the Fountain of all your hopes for eternity, not to receive the grace of God in vain.”⁶

In 1856, Cowper returned to ministry in Sydney, successively as the first (Acting) Principal of Moore College, St John's Glebe, St Phillip's Church Hill, and finally to St Andrew's Cathedral as its first and longest serving Dean.⁷ In the early months of 1858, as he watched his father gradually fade, he noted that thoughts of "the great assembly of saints in the paradise of God, and the final triumph of the universal church with its Lord in Glory everlasting" were much on his father's mind.⁸

Cowper's eternal perspective came through strongly in funeral sermons. He confidently proclaimed the gospel light:

*"which has shown us beyond all doubt, first, that there is a heaven of bliss, and secondly, by what means it is to be secured. Were it not for this revelation, what hope should we have to console us when mourning the death of friends, or to cheer us amid life's manifold sorrows, or to support us under its burdens? None, my brethren, none whatever. A gloomy cloud would have enveloped the tombs of the departed, and fear and sadness would have rested upon every reflecting mind as it realized its own condition and dwelt upon its prospects. But how different now, is our lot, blessed as we are with the Christian revelation! Its declarations upon this subject are plain, simple, and unmistakable. It sets before us life and immortality as brought out from obscurity to light by the Gospel; it tells us that 'as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead'." [1 Cor 15:21]*⁹

The Dean explained that the Burial Service uses Revelation 14:13 in order, "to raise [our] thoughts from earth to heaven—from that which is mortal and corruptible to that which is spiritual and eternal; from the sighs and griefs of time to the rest and the joys of eternity." When he summed up Richardson's ministry amongst them, he reminded the congregation that "he sought to win your hearts to the Redeemer, and so to bring you to Him that when you should die, you might 'die in the Lord'."¹⁰ This reminder then led to Cowper making a personal appeal to the people, by asking what Richardson would say if he was able to address the assembled throng at his own funeral. Cowper was pretty sure he knew, and concluded by doing the same:

*"Let me then urge this upon you in the spirit of love and concern for your everlasting welfare. And when the Saviour returns to gather His Saints unto Him, may we all be found among His sanctified ones and enter with Him into His eternal joy!"*¹¹

In the first half of 1902, when Cowper faced his own final days, he had to endure five months of illness. When he was saying farewell to a friend, he said, "We shall all meet in a better world".¹² Cowper left this world in June, just short of his 92nd birthday. His coffin was placed in St Andrew's Cathedral for the whole night before his funeral. It was bedecked with "white hyacinths, a fit emblem of 'sure and steadfast hope'."¹³ After a joyous service, he was taken through "a dense, sympathetic, and deeply respectful crowd" to Randwick, to be laid in the family vault. There the crowd sang his favourite hymn, whose words capture Cowper's own perspective, which he considered so essential to life and ministry:¹⁴

*Jesu, Lover of my soul,
let me to Thy bosom fly [...]
Safe into the haven guide;
Oh, receive my soul at last.
[...]
Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within
Thou of life the fountain art;
Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart;
Rise to all eternity.*

NOTES

- 1 *Proceedings of the Second Session of the Twelfth Synod of the Diocese of Sydney, New South Wales, September 16th to September 23rd, 1902* (Sydney: William Andrews, 1902), 75. Emphasis in quotations mine.
- 2 W.M. Cowper, *Autobiography & Reminiscences* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1902), 222–223. In all quotations, italics are my own.
- 3 W.M. Cowper, *Sermon preached at Dartmouth, 15 Sept 1833* (Sydney: Diocesan Archives: 1994/67/1)
- 4 W.M. Cowper, *The Christian Training of Children by their Parents. A Sermon, preached in St Philip's Church, Sydney, on the 11th January, 1852* (Sydney: Kemp & Fairfax, 1852), 5.
- 5 W.M. Cowper, *A Brief Account of the Closing Period of the Life of Mrs W.M. Cowper, who departed to her eternal rest, at the Parsonage, Stroud, October 21st, 1854. Derived principally from memoranda made during her illness* (Sydney: Reading and Wellbank, 1855), 6. See also J.M. Tooher, 'Margaret Cowper (1806–1854): A Woman of Eternal Hope', in E. Loane (ed.), *Proclaiming Christ in the Heart of the City. Ministry at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney. Dean Cowper, Dean Talbot and Dean Shilton* (Sydney: St Andrew's Cathedral, 2019), 167–190.]
- 6 W.M. Cowper, *A Sermon preached at Booral and Stroud, Port Stephens, on Sunday, February 10th, 1856, on the Occasion of His Resigning the Ministerial Charge of that District [2 Cor 6:1]* (Sydney: Reading & Wellbank, 1856), 21, 24, iii, 5, 8, 14.
- 7 See my 'William Macquarie Cowper (1810–1902): The First Dean of St Andrew's Cathedral', in Loane, *Proclaiming Christ in the Heart of the City*, 49–90.
- 8 Cowper, *Autobiography*, 61–62.
- 9 W.M. Cowper, & W.H. Walsh, *Two Sermons preached in St Mark's Church, Darling Point, on Sunday, January 3rd, 1864, on the occasion of the death of Rev George Walter Richardson [Rev 13:14]* (Sydney: Joseph Cook, 1864), 9, 10, 15
- 10 Cowper, *Two Sermons*, 15.
- 11 Cowper, *Two Sermons*, 16.
- 12 Cowper, *Autobiography*, 245.
- 13 Cowper, *Autobiography*, 248.
- 14 Cowper, *Autobiography*, 249.



New Cranmer Society Synod Breakfast 2019

RHYS BEZZANT

In this talk from last year Rhys spoke of his work on the Doctrine Commission of General Synod, and its intersection with his own Christian walk.

What a privilege to have been asked to address the New Cranmer Breakfast. Apart from the year that I have been overseas, I think I have been to all of these since 1997. Were there any before then? Not just a privilege to speak but also to be in the company of friends and colleagues on the front line of ministry in Melbourne – synod for me is as much working out how to support you as it is voting and tweeting!

Of course I have been asked to speak about my work on the Doctrine Commission over the last couple of years, and perhaps I will sneak in some reflections on the Liturgy Commission as well for good measure. In both those forums it is an honour to represent Melbourne evangelicals, and in both forums I learn so much. Faculty at Ridley College find it hard to understand when I say that these Commissions are some of the best PD in my year. Where else do I sit down for a week and talk theology, and interact with the other side of the church and their assumptions and Biblical interpretation and ethics? Of course on the Liturgy Commission we don't just do liturgy, but talk culture and language and theology and history, though not without some sharp moments along the way as we come across an impasse. I am the newest member of the Doctrine Commission and found myself in the middle of a book project already planned. My chapter on whether to bless same sex relationships was not on the original plan, and I had to argue that it was central to the debates in our church. I was told it was not part of the agenda, clearly proven wrong.

My chapter on whether to bless same sex relationships has tried to prosecute one point, namely that blessing in the Biblical story line is not pastoral support but is a theological recommendation. Blessing assumes alignment with the purposes of the creation, and being assured of God's help to human beings to achieve that goal. It is profoundly eschatological. It is about promoting the good, the true and the beautiful, the great ends of human existence in God's world. And when human beings have sinned, blessing is contrasted with cursing, the removal of God's help and assurance, with the reminder that God doesn't necessarily have to use us to achieve his purposes. Blessing is a theological recommendation: what is blessed must be constrained theologically as something that is part of God's plans for all humankind. We use the language of blessing commonly to mean emotional support or personal encouragement, which is fine. Words morph in their semantic range over long periods, but when anchored in the Scriptural story line the word blessing is much more tightly defined.



Blessing is a theological recommendation not just pastoral affirmation.

Of course some of my liberal friends would argue that same sex intimacy is part of God's good purposes for the world and that we have wrongly understood the Bible. Or some would argue that the Bible clearly speaks against same sex intimacy, but that the Bible is wrong. Both options I reject. It seems to me to require special pleading in both instances to come to those conclusions. The Bible is clear in speaking against same sex intimacy and in affirming marriage as between a man and a woman, to the exclusion of all others, with covenantal shape.

My chapter also speaks about Anglican liturgical norms, as we pray our doctrine. We must therefore exercise caution before putting something like blessing same sex relationships on paper, as it were, because in our church liturgy ends up taking on a status more than first intended. And Anglicans in their liturgy have been cautious in blessing anyway – the term is not used as much as we might think. Some wedding services do not contain the word, showing that it is not the essence of marriage. Blessing most often occurs in the Communion service, and I note that the blessing at the end of the service is to be paired with the absolution earlier in the service and the consecration of the elements at a later stage. Blessing assumes that we have repented of our sins, are enjoying unimpeded fellowship with the Lord, and are being sent out to take our part in God's purposes for the world. It is not a stand alone element. The priest alone does all three. Blessing assumes faith and repentance. Blessing assumes God has theological intentions for the world. Blessing reassures us that God has our back even when we are scattered in the world during the week. Blessing is not merely pastoral affirmation but a theological recommendation. We can't get beyond this, though I note that recently one of my colleagues on the Doctrine Commission in the public media has presented the language of blessing in substantially different terms.

My chapter also tries to outline some pastoral responses to the thorny questions of pastoral care of same sex attracted members of the congregation, or of family members of members of the congregation. It wasn't actually my brief, but it wasn't going to appear elsewhere in the book, and given that I was denying blessing as merely pastoral affirmation, I think I needed to include it. The paragraphs on pastoral care remind us to welcome wherever we can though the language of inclusion should be used judiciously. We must be careful to use language wisely, not to react with fear to what we might find morally or aesthetically uncomfortable, to train the

congregation to pursue honesty and accountability in matters of sexuality more generally, and to ask any same sex attracted individual how they might best be encouraged in their struggle against sin. Anyway, it is estimated that two and a half times as many same sex attracted people attend conservative churches than liberal ones, so it can't easily be assumed that conservative churches are not friendly towards those whose identity is not straight. Legislating for same sex rights has not dealt with all the pastoral needs of those who identify as gay. Issues in pastoral care are deeper than simple affirmation.

And this is not just theory. As a same sex attracted man, I am passionate about making sure that another voice is heard in contemporary debates. When the bishops received our report, they gave the feedback that the book would have been strengthened had there been a voice for the LGBTI community included, which grieved me. Mine was that voice, though I did not include in my chapter my own testimony. I have been sharing my story with family and friends for forty years, but have always felt that I would be healthier and happier getting on with life and ministry with questions of sexuality on the back burner. From the moment when I became a Christian at 13, long before I knew any Anglicans, from Sydney or from Melbourne, I came to the conclusion from reading the Scriptures that same sex intimacy was not part of God's plan for my flourishing, and that he had a better path. And my strategy to keep things on the back burner was chiefly successful. I overthink things, so I figured having to talk about sexuality in the church would take its toll. But things have changed in society, such that now it takes more effort not to say anything when embroiled in debates in church and society than to say something. I want to be able to care for people who want to remain faithful to the Biblical revelation and to cheer for them from the sidelines. I want to provide a model of what it means to be happy in celibacy: godliness with contentment is great gain, as I pray over each week. I want to be authentic with my students who prize authenticity in their leaders above almost all else. Their reactions over the last six months as I have confided in those whom I mentor has been extraordinarily gracious and supportive. Above all I want to praise God that I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and to know new depths in that claim.

Beyond the question of the theological account of homosexuality, the issues of same sex identity are significant amongst evangelicals. There are within our constituency disagreements on questions of identity despite common cause in promoting a traditional view of marriage. My own view is that same sex desire doesn't define me, though it profoundly shapes me. Individual desires are neutral until we act on them, as James says: "When that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin" (2:15). We debate whether the word "gay" can be used of Christians, probably a hotter debate in the US than here. I personally do not use the word "gay," as I have never been in a same sex intimate relationship, have never been part of the gay scene, never aspired to an identity outside of my identity as a son of God, beloved of the Father, cleansed by the Son, empowered by the Spirit. These are the categories I most cherish, though I suspect I won't now be able to control how others choose to describe me. We were called upon in bold

terms in Synod last year to stop speaking in terms of same sex attraction and instead to use the language of being gay, which I found highly imperialistic.

I am free to choose whatever language I want, and so should we as evangelicals too.

Evangelicals are supposed to be the judgmental ones, according to the media and common perceptions. And we should watch our tone in public debates, and think through how our views are being received. But I find it extraordinary that over many years sharing my story, and more recently writing hand-written letters to perhaps one hundred friends and colleagues, that there has never been even one moment of disdain or lovelessness. My evangelical friends have been without exception the epitome of kindness, support, love and care. Now it might be that I have chosen my friends well, or that Melbourne evangelicals aren't known for their fundamentalist credentials. But I want to affirm those my dear friends who have gone out of their way to love me. I decided to make this statement here during Synod and at the New Cranmer breakfast as a way of thanking you in this safe space for your concern. It has not gone unnoticed, brothers and sisters. The Ridley Faculty and staff have proven to be a community of great moral integrity and pastoral concern. There is a lot of love at Ridley, which is what the Lord thinks we should be best known for anyway.

But I don't want to make this speech about me. Our church is in great crisis. Like a cancer it has snuck up on us, growing slowly over many years. This debate on same sex relationships has split the church almost everywhere in the Anglican world. Though it is about sexuality on the surface, the deeper issue is Biblical authority and hermeneutics, or perhaps deeper still about the nature of sin and salvation. Some of my colleagues on the Doctrine Commission want to make the doctrine of the Trinity the only issue that would split the church, for to disagree about the Creeds is to tear at our common unity. I understand this position as far as it goes. But we have to remember that the doctrine of the Trinity is not just an elegant statement about theology, but was designed to defend the deity of the Son and the deity of the Spirit. These are the true first order issues. Our commitment as trinitarian Christians is not merely to the term *homosexuals*, but to Jesus Christ as Lord of our life, as Lord of the church. His atoning death and powerful resurrection are good news for the world, including those who are same sex attracted. No wonder that Paul can say that "Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practise homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor 6:9-11). Sin and salvation are terms which define how we enter the Kingdom of God, such is the seriousness of this moment. So what should we do?

Whenever I have been embroiled in debates in the past, or concerned about the state of the church, which is after all, just about every day, my personal strategy has been to redouble my

efforts to raise up new leaders for the church. When I studied at Ridley and faced the pain of theological reflection with other ordinands who I disagreed with on just about every point, I responded every Monday night for about twenty years to go up to Queen's College and mentor a few students. In one way it felt such a powerless way of responding to heresy in the church, with so few results, in the short term at least. But I could come home each Monday night praying that the next generation of leaders in Melbourne would have more theological acumen, more love for the Lord, more skills for service, than others I was meeting. What should we do positively? Engage in Synod debates respectfully of course.

But more than this: we need to redouble our efforts to spot future leaders of the church. I am afraid to say that the largest parishes of Melbourne have not done well on this score in the last ten years, nor often the smaller ones. If we want to reform our church, the chief strategy must be to identify, encourage, sponsor, support and send your best to Ridley.

Which of our churches is paying the fees of prospective ordinands, or giving them a living allowance? Which of our parishes is giving financial support to Ridley when they don't have students to send to us?

Which of our clergy are intentionally and regularly mentoring an individual to train them for future service?

Which of our churches when they send someone to Ridley immediately begins looking out for someone to send next year? Who will pastor our grandchildren? They are in your creche or youth group or on your parish council now. Synod debates certainly – leadership succession absolutely! Ridley is one of Melbourne's great evangelical institutions, perhaps even the most effective strategy for multiplying Gospel witness in this city and beyond. I must call upon you to make every effort to cultivate leadership aspirants in your parish for the sake of the church.

How wonderful that our difficult debates on sexuality are really an opportunity to take stock, think again about theology, and to plan with new clarity for the renewal of our diocese and the national church beyond! May God bless our efforts this day for gospel unity and gospel witness and gospel advance!

COLLECT (FOR THE WEEK OF MY BIRTHDAY):

*Almighty God,
in your wisdom you have so ordered our earthly life
that we must walk by faith and not by sight:
Give us such trust in your fatherly care
that in the face of all perplexities
we may give proof of our faith
by the courage of our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

'A virgin will conceive.' Which virgin?

MICHAEL BENNETT

"All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us'.)' " (Matthew 1:22-23)

Matthew's quotation is, of course, from Isaiah 7:14. It is argued here that Isaiah 7:14, read in its context, has nothing directly to do with the virgin Mary or Jesus' birth, though it will be seen to have a legitimate indirect application, once we understand the key words to fulfil. It will be argued there are at least two types of fulfillment: predictive and repetitive. Because of King Ahaz's godless behaviour (c732-716BC), the Lord raised up two armies against him. The northern kingdom of Israel joined with the pagan people of Aram, and invaded Judah in the south. God sends Isaiah with his son to meet with King Ahaz. (7:3) Isaiah has some good news for the king, followed by some frightening news:

FIRST, THE GOOD NEWS

Isaiah tells the king God's promise, that these combined armies will not defeat him. They will go away without victory. (7:3-9) Isaiah calls the king to trust in the true God of heaven:

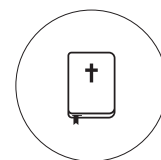
If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. (7:9)

God offers Ahaz a sign to prove that this remarkable deliverance will occur:

Therefore the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel. He will be eating curds and honey when he knows how to reject the wrong and choose right. (Isaiah 7:14-15).

While this child is still in his infancy, this threat of invasion will be removed. This is reinforced in Isaiah 8:2, in which the age of this infant is described as being, "[b]efore the child knows how to say 'My father' or 'My mother'." (8:4).

What follows?: "Then I made love to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son." (8:3). The prophetess cannot be Isaiah's first wife as she could hardly be described as either a young woman of marriageable age or a virgin. It seems either she may be a second wife, or perhaps his first wife has died. So, the prophecy that the virgin will conceive in this context has no direct application to Mary or Jesus. The boy is Isaiah's own child, and the mother is Isaiah's own second wife.



NOW THE BAD NEWS

Isaiah had not finished giving him God's message:

For before the boy knows how to say 'My father' or 'My mother'...the Lord will bring on you and your people...the king of Assyria! (7:16-17)

The boy child may be a sign of political salvation, but he is also a sign of coming political judgement. The Assyrians were infamous for their blood-thirsty warlike practices. This was extremely bad news indeed. The Assyrian army, armed with recently-minted, mass-produced iron weaponry, crossed the Euphrates River, probably at the Carchemish fords which they controlled, and soon the crimson tide of their unbridled violence began to spread across the Levant and beyond. Israel, Aram, Edom, and Judah itself soon found their late Bronze Age weapons to be seriously out of date. After overwhelming Judah's second strongest city of Lachish in a violent conflict, the Assyrian forces surrounded the only opposition left, the city of Jerusalem, taunting them. It seemed that God had finally deserted the city to its well-deserved fate. But:

That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. (2 Kings 19:35-36)

God's people were miraculously saved in a salvation event arguably ranking only second to their Exodus miracle, and they contributed nothing! They were merely witnesses to the work God accomplished on their behalf.

However we must go back a few hours. For Isaiah the prophet was sent to the new King Hezekiah with this message from the Lord:

This is what the Lord says concerning the king of Assyria: He will not enter this city, or shoot an arrow here. I will defend this city and save it, for the sake of David my servant. (2 Kings 19:32-36)

This message is genuinely predictive prophecy, fulfilled in the most amazing manner.

REPETITIVE PROPHECY

So why does Matthew quote Isaiah 7:14 as referring to Jesus? By any logic this cannot be said to be predictive prophesy, except by completely ignoring the Old Testament context. It

would be better to label it something like "repetitive prophecy" or, put more simply, "here-we-go-again prophecy". To pick up Isaiah 7:14-15 (= Matthew 1:22-23) again as an example: in the Old Testament, God gave his people a sign, which in context was a sign of both salvation and judgement: salvation from twin enemies Israel and Aram; to be followed by judgement at the hands of the feared Assyrians; then followed by unaided salvation again on the night that 185,000 enemies perished.

Now, in the first pages of the New Testament, God repeats the dose. A virgin is to conceive. This child will also be a sign of both salvation and judgement: salvation towards those who put their trust in him as their Lord and Saviour; judgement and destruction to those who wantonly choose otherwise. Alone and unaided by any human effort, this obedient child will accomplish the ultimate and climactic salvation event, such that both the Exodus and the Assyrian deliverances pale into insignificance.

This is not to deny predictive prophecy. In chapter two of Matthew we encounter a clear case of predictive prophesy. God, through Micah, foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, and now the prediction has come true. (Matthew 2:6 = Micah 5:2-4). Clearly predictive! But, only a few verses later in Matthew, we come across perhaps the clearest case of repetitive prophecy. After Joseph and Mary return from Egypt to Judah with the child Jesus, Matthew adds this comment:

And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son'. (Matthew 2:14-15)

Again, if we look at the Old Testament context, Hosea 11:1-2, this out of Egypt prophecy has nothing directly to do with the incident recorded in Matthew:

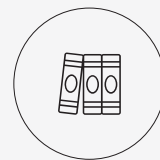
"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images".

God is repeating the dose. Long ago, God brought a son out of Egypt, namely, the nation of Israel, under the leadership of Moses. This son proved to be rebellious and recalcitrant, and finally this son was punished by exile in Babylon. Now God repeats the dose: he brings another son out of Egypt, a very different son. He will obey his Father, even to death upon the cross.



Jordan Valley. Photo credit: Eddie and Carolina Stigson

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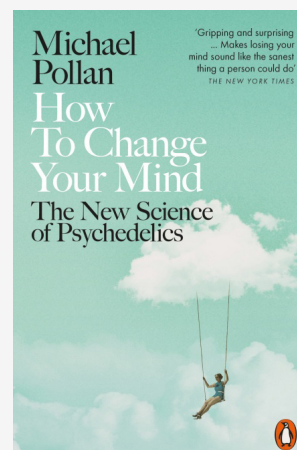
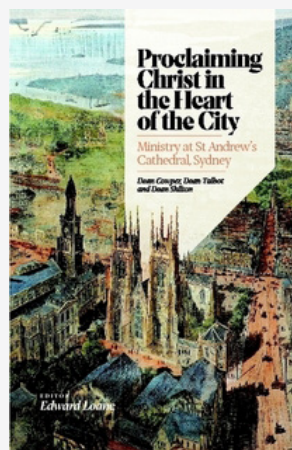
Proclaiming Christ in the Heart of the City: Ministry at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney.

EDWARD LOANE (ED.)
ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL, 2019.

The last two years have seen significant anniversaries for St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney. The year 2019 was the bicentenary of the laying of its foundation stone, and 2018 marked 150 years since its eventual consecration. It is fitting therefore that this volume has been produced to mark both occasions. It is even more fitting that the focus of the volume is not on the building itself, but on the building of Christ's Kingdom through the proclamation of the gospel in and through the ministry of the cathedral. As Archbishop Glenn Davies writes in his foreword, "this book focuses upon the living testimony of our cathedral, its living stones, rather than its static stonework." (p. xii).

The opening chapter by Loane charts the history of Anglican cathedrals, their purpose and particular characteristics. Along the way he answers the common critique that Anglican cathedrals "are unreformed vestiges of the medieval church which have no place in Protestant Christianity." (p. 4) Tracing sources dating back to the English reformers, Loane shows that Protestant cathedrals were envisioned as serving both an evangelistic and a training purpose. With a shortage of clergy able to preach, Cranmer considered cathedrals to be places that ought to function as centres of preaching excellence. The reformers' notion of cathedrals serving as central churches from which bishops could direct the mission of the diocese through preaching and training of ministers was the reason why cathedrals were retained, and was also viewed by the reformers as returning them to their original Augustinian purpose (p. 22). The chapter also discusses reasons why this hope was largely not realised in the ensuing centuries, and how by the mid-19th century cathedrals had become ideal venues for re-establishing the ceremonial ritualism that had characterised the medieval church. At the same time Evangelicals continued to conceive of cathedrals as centres of mission, preaching and leadership training. It was during this contested era that the trajectory of the Sydney cathedral was shaped. In 1857, Bishop Barker outlined the purpose of the cathedral to be the "parish church" of the whole diocese where the diocesan "chief pastor", the bishop, could minister and preach. (p. 41).

Building on this foundation, the central section of the book consists of four chapters, the first three dedicated in turn to the Cathedral's longest-serving deans: William Cowper (by Peter Bolt), Albert Talbot (by Colin Bale) and Lance Shilton (by Edward Loane). The fourth chapter (by Jane Tooher) considers the contribution of William Cowper's first wife Margaret.



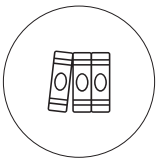
Each of these biographical chapters give real insight into the nature of the ministry at the cathedral during those eras. The deans were chosen not only because were they the longest-serving, but also because the eras in which they served were so formative.

Australia's first native-born clergyman, William Cowper, emerges in Bolt's portrayal as someone eminently well prepared in the first half of his life for the preaching and ministry-training priorities that remained his priorities during his long tenure as dean (1858-1902). The chapter by Colin Bale on Dean Albert Talbot (1912-1936) explores his role as a more liberal evangelical dean, in particular his involvement in the social issues of Sydney's industrial working class. Dean Lance Shilton (1973-1989) is shown by Loane to be a clear champion of the cathedral as a centre for evangelism and public engagement. Having had experience in city-centre churches in Melbourne and Adelaide, Shilton was convinced of the strategic role of such churches and his cathedral ministry was a natural extension of that. Shilton summed up the purpose of cathedral ministry as "Communication, that is communication with God in worship, communication with other Christians in fellowship, and communication with the whole city and beyond in evangelism." (p. 146)

The beautiful chapter on William Cowper's first wife Margaret by Jane Tooher centres on the last year of her life, as narrated by William. Margaret died four years before William's appointment as dean, and as he reflects on the spiritual life and tenderness they shared, and Margaret's boldness in facing death, it is clear how formative this experience of grief was on his ministry over the coming decades.

The final chapter, written by the current Dean, Kanishka Raffel, gives a wonderful insight into the present workings of the cathedral, and the prospects of ministry in that place over the coming years. Such ministry he envisages to be in continuity with his predecessors' evangelistic focus and keenness for seizing the opportunity for public witness and proclamation to the city. This book fulfils its promise. We meet afresh the 'living stones' who through the decades have sought to proclaim Christ, make disciples and show Christ's love to the city and beyond.

// GAVIN PERKINS, NSW



How to change your mind: the new science of psychedelics

MICHAEL POLLAN
ALLEN LANE, 2018

I loved reading Michael Pollan's book *Cooked*, and watching the Netflix documentary series based on the book. He tackled an interesting subject in a multi-disciplinary manner and writes prose that carries you effortlessly along. Pollan's interest has turned from food and its production, preparation and consumption to psychedelic drugs, and the renewal of scientific investigation of their effects. This is a fascinating story with a varied cast of extraordinary characters, told through Pollan's mix of science writing, social history, journalism, and personal accounts of his own experiments (in this case, with psychedelics). The basic story of psychedelics that the book recounts is of the initial growth of a scientific programme of psychedelic research in the mid-twentieth century, followed by the infamy brought upon psychedelics by those (such as Timothy Leary) who wanted psychedelics out of the lab and in the brains of the general population, and the sooner the better. This led to the closure of the research programme and the scheduling of these drugs. However, there were those who worked quietly but determinedly for years to reopen the door that had been closed, and a generation later they have succeeded, so that today psychedelics are again being studied by doctors and neuroscientists. The hope is that on the one hand, psychedelics might give neuroscientists new tools for studying the brain and its operations so that consciousness, brain function, and their connection might be better understood. On the other hand, doctors and psychiatrists hope that psychedelics might prove effective in treatment of patients who face terminal disease, addictions or depression and anxiety. The book is a hopeful one that seeks to indicate the promise that these researchers are seeking to fulfill.

The book is also the story of some of the underground aspects of the history of psychedelics in the west.

The big thing about these non-lethal, non-addictive drugs is the power of the experience that people may have when taking them.

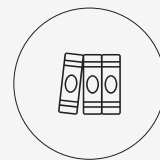
At its height, the psychedelic experience is equivalent to a full blown mystical experience, where people lose their sense of local and individuated ego in a larger, ineffable sense of self that is merged with the whole cosmos. Everything shines, and is full of beauty, meaning and joy; everything is one, and love is at the bottom of reality, and people come away from some psychedelic experiences deeply convinced that they have seen these things, and come to know them in a direct and undeniable way. The experience is so powerful that it cannot

help but be understood in spiritual terms. People often rate these experiences as among the most meaningful experiences of their lives. Many people, convinced of the power of psychedelics to give ordinary people a revelatory experience that leaves them filled with peace, openness and a sense of the meaningfulness of life, make it their business to keep the practice of guiding people on trips alive, whether or not such activities are legal. Some are wishing and waiting to see psychedelics become a much more mainstream way for people to have spiritual experiences that will benefit them in ordinary life. All acknowledge the unusual fact that any therapeutic potency of such drugs is not simply connected to its effect on the cells and systems of the body, so much as to the effect on the person that arises from their conscious experience of the trip, and the way they make sense of it. Hence the importance in the world of psychedelics of 'set'—the attitude you take into the experience and the expectations you have of it—and 'setting'—where you are, and who you are with, how they treat you and how safe and secure you feel. Bad trips are far more likely when people take psychedelics without attention being paid to set and setting by people who have some knowledge of these things.

You may be wondering why I am reviewing a book like this in Essentials.

Here are two reasons: first, the book is a testimony to the hunger human beings have for meaningful experiences, that is experiences that impress upon you the meaningfulness of the world about you and your belonging to that world of meaning. The conviction that love founds reality was mentioned in the book, but not discussed much by Pollan (whose longtime atheism was opened up to the possibility of something more through writing the book—the closing words are, "the mind is vaster, and the world is ever so much more alive, than I knew when I began"). The convictions people bring back from a highly mystical trip are a challenge to a hard core atheist view of the cosmos (although it is also easy to retort to the tripper that if you put a chemical in your brain that binds to your receptors, and suppresses your default mode network, why should you believe the experience that results is in any way a true insight?) But they are also something of a puzzle to Christians. Should we reinforce the convictions that may arise about a divinely made, meaningful cosmos with love at its foundation? Or should we repudiate any such convictions as having nothing to do with God and his truth? This leads to the second reason for bringing this book to readers' attention: if in coming years psychedelics do become an accepted part of treatment of depression, addiction or end-of-life existential distress, how should Christians regard their use? As a pseudo-deliverance built on an illusion? As an alternative and therefore problematic claim to provide a revelation that is not the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? Or as a useful therapy that might be baptised by using a set and setting consistent with Christian conviction? This will not have to be settled anytime soon, but Pollan is a big name writer and this book will no doubt give the movement to rehabilitate and utilise psychedelics a big push along.

// BEN UNDERWOOD, WA



The Road to Character

DAVID BROOKS
PENGUIN BOOKS, 2016

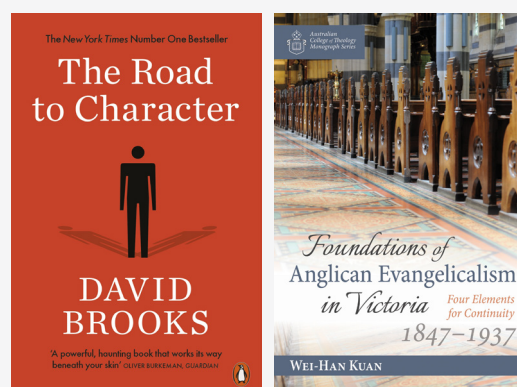
David Brooks says that he wrote this book to save his own soul (xi). As a New York Times columnist he is “paid to be a narcissistic blow-hard” who has to work hard “to avoid a life of smug superficiality” (xii). In an effort to avoid “self-satisfied moral mediocrity” he wants to clear away the overgrown road to character and try to start down it. ‘Character’ is your moral core, your capacity for responding to the needs of the world, for struggle and self-conquest, for humility and self-effacement, for maintaining dignity, for giving and receiving love, for being open to grace.

The road to character is overgrown, says Brooks, because our culture has become shallow.

We are too focussed on skills, achievement and success in the outer world, the world of wealth, knowledge, status and power. We have lost the knack of talking about the inner world, the world of wisdom, meaning and growth in the qualities of heart and soul. We have embraced ourselves, celebrating and affirming who we are, and lost an older, “crooked timber” tradition that emphasised all the ways we fall short of who we should be and how we must work to overcome who we are in order that we may be someone worth admiring or emulating, someone really integrated and mature.

Brooks opens by analysing a cultural shift in the West from values of self-effacement and modesty and a low opinion of one’s own importance (“little me”), to a “big me” moral ecology that encourages us to think that we are special, that we should trust what we find in ourselves, that the way to maturity is to unfold faithfully what we discover in our hearts, not to struggle to tame and transform it. The bulk of the book is then ten biographical chapters of figures that Brooks thinks have some moral nobility about their lives that makes them worthy for us to know and perhaps emulate in some dimension.

The subjects of the chapters are men and women, religious and secular, and their journeys along the road to character are various. There is Frances Perkins, summoned by her experience of the tragedy of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory fire to a life of single-minded political work in the service of workers. Tough and shrewd, she gave herself to the cause, and this sense of vocation took her to the inner circle of President Roosevelt. There is Dwight Eisenhower whose rigorous self control and moderation expressed the basic conviction that our sin gives us reason to distrust and control ourselves inwardly and outwardly. There is Dorothy Day, whose bohemian life gave way, in a conversion to Roman Catholicism, to a life of self-sacrificial service of the poor, inspired by a desire to live for God. There is George Marshall (of the Marshall Plan) who committed himself to the institution

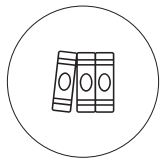


of the military, and submerged his own ego to serve those over him and what the army and the country asked him to do. There is Philip Randolph, the civil rights leader whose determined, dignified and disciplined life equipped him for the moral tasks of his moment.

Late in the book we get two interesting chapters where the direction changes from figures whose self-integration and maturity seems to come through a fair bit of choice and self-training, to figures whose self-integration and maturity comes more through things that happened to them. First comes George Eliot (the author whose real name was Mary Evans) whose early neediness and emotional immaturity stabilised with experience, and especially through her romance and domestic partnership with George Lewes, who unlocked and encouraged her novel writing. Then comes Augustine, whose experience of God’s grace broke the spell of his infatuation with ambition, pride and pleasure, and the method of self-cultivation, and re-ordered his loves, so that life could begin to become about living out love for God. Lastly comes the chaotic and incomparable Samuel Johnson: *sui generis*.

Apart from the astute social analysis it contains, this book testifies to the enduring hunger human beings have to pay attention to a real moral core we have, even if we neglect it. Brooks legitimises our desire to feel like our lives are meaningful, and that this is not some weak-minded illusion to be dispelled, but a vital cue to us for the task of personal integration and maturity. Brooks does not want to be shallow, and wants to resurrect the old vocabulary of sin, soul, spirit and grace, and the conviction that we should distrust ourselves, discipline ourselves and seek our own healing, rather than parading and primping ourselves. To the degree that he succeeds, he primes people to think they have the kinds of problems that Jesus came to address, and that what the gospel has to say might be more deeply and lastingly relevant than some productivity guru giving you life-hacks or some pop star urging you to believe in yourself. Brooks’ subjects are flawed and their roads to character are not systematic, and nor are they entirely admirable as people even at the end. Brooks does not try to line it all up neatly. I did find the account of grace in the Augustine chapter to be attractive and palatable enough that I am considering taking it to my Big Questions reading group to see what my secular friends make of it.

// BEN UNDERWOOD, WA



Foundations of Anglican Evangelicalism in Victoria: Four Elements for Continuity, 1847–1937

WEI-HAN KUAN
AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY
MONOGRAPH SERIES, 2019

If, like me, you are from a state other than Victoria, you may be asking yourself the question, “Why read a book on another part of Australia?” You may also be asking, “How can the period 1847–1937 be relevant today?” The key reason for reading this book is in its subtitle.

The Rev’d Dr Wei-Han Kuan has done a great service to the whole church, and especially to evangelicals in the Anglican Church, by identifying four key factors that enable ongoing evangelical witness in an Anglican diocese.

Buried in the detail of this book, based as it is on a Th.D. dissertation completed for the Australian College of Theology, is the evidence for Kuan’s thesis. For evangelicalism to survive—and I would argue for the church as a whole to thrive—it must have what the Diocese of Melbourne had during the leadership of Charles Perry, its first bishop 1847–1876. It needs:

1. vibrant and vital evangelical parishes;
2. vibrant and vital evangelical societies focussed on mission and evangelism;
3. a robustly evangelical Anglican theological college; and
4. a diocesan bishop willing to promote and support evangelicals and their causes.

Moreover, there is a circular flow from the parishes to societies, to this college, and to the bishop.

The author has selected a 90-year period of study that starts with the formation of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne (then coterminous with today’s State of Victoria). He finishes at the cusp of the Second World War in 1937. The reasons the author provides for this somewhat artificial end date are rather weak, but he leaves the door open to further research which might prove very illuminating, especially if recent motions of Melbourne’s Synod, the rise of The New Cranmer Society and the resignation of the current Archbishop of Melbourne as Primate were to be included in such a study.

Kuan’s introductory chapters provide a helpful analysis of the definition of evangelicalism and (together with his 2019

Preface and Epilogue) the current situation for evangelicals in Australia. He continues by telling this largely untold story in the form of a very engaging narrative. The story of the impact of Charles Perry is so significant that it spans chapters 2 to 4; and the gradual unravelling of his evangelical legacy is told with great insight in the last two chapters, which cover the period after Perry’s departure.

Common misconceptions, based as they often are on hearsay rather than historical facts, are addressed, including that Perry’s immediate predecessor, James Moorhouse, dismantled the evangelical heritage of the first bishop. Kuan’s meticulous examination of the evidence shows that Perry himself sowed these seeds, mainly by not addressing the four issues listed above. This is surely an object lesson for all of us who are today committed to the persistence of evangelical faith and culture in a diocese. It suggests that, without observing these four ‘rules for ongoing evangelicalism’, even a robustly evangelical diocese such as Sydney could, in time, grow weak.

If we apply these rules to dioceses where there are hopes of a stronger and long-lasting evangelical presence (e.g. Perth and Adelaide), we can quickly identify the missing elements. For Perth, it is an evangelical archbishop and substantial growth in the strong, but still small, evangelical societies such as CMS and EFAC. For Adelaide, it is the lack of an evangelical Anglican theological college and an evangelical archbishop. An interesting conjecture is that the recent growth of evangelicalism in each of these dioceses may be due to Adelaide and Perth having three of these four key elements, albeit different ones.

For me the most exciting aspect of this study was the spiritual encouragement I received from Kuan’s research into the life and witness of one of the evangelical ‘greats’ of Australia: Charles Perry (1807–1891).

Perry was an undergraduate in Cambridge during the ministry of Charles Simeon and helped place (what was to become) the Anglican Church of Australia on a firm gospel footing. He is also a model and inspiration to us all of evangelical witness. Kuan argues that our churches must maintain this witness “in the face of growing secularism in the Minority World, and as they experience rapid expansion in many parts of the Majority World” (p. ix).

Perry’s influence on the wider church in Australia was evidenced by another interesting fact that Kuan has brought to light. During Perry’s episcopacy there were more graduates from Moore College ordained for Melbourne than any other Australian Diocese (including Sydney). His influence on the national church was huge, including through his successful promulgation of a conservative evangelical theology during the development of the prototype Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia. How we hope (and earnestly pray) that the current Archbishop of Melbourne and Primate of Australia would do the same!

// DR KHIM HARRIS, WA

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